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USDA SEEKS COMMENTS ON 1991 SUPPORT PRICES FOR WOOL AND MOHAIR

WASHINGTON, May 10—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation is seeking comments on methods for calculating support prices for wool on unshorn lambs and mohair for the 1991 marketing year.

The National Wool Act of 1954, as amended, provides that the support price for pulled wool shall be set at a level relative to the support price for shorn wool so as to maintain normal marketing practices for pulled wool. Pulled wool is the wool removed from the pelt of a slaughtered sheep. In the past, this provision has been implemented through payments based on the hundredweight of live, unshorn lambs marketed.

The law also says that mohair be supported at a level determined necessary to maintain approximately the same percentage of parity as for shorn wool. The support price shall be set at a level not more than 15 percent above or below the comparable percentage of parity at which shorn wool is supported.

The shorn wool support price is based on a formula prescribed in the wool act. Based on the current reported parity index, the 1991 shorn wool support price will be $1.88 per pound (grease basis).

A preliminary regulatory impact analysis on the options is available from: Director, Commodity Analysis Division, USDA/ASCS, Room 3741-S, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013 or by calling (202) 447-6734.

Details appear in the May 14 Federal Register. Comments must be received by June 13 and will be available for public inspection in Room 3760-S of USDA's South Building during regular business hours.

Janise Zygmont (202) 447-8206

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USDA REVISES FRESH TOMATO STANDARDS

WASHINGTON, May 10—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will revise the U.S. standards for grades of fresh tomatoes, effective Oct. 1.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA'S Agricultural Marketing Service, said the revisions will:

—require that the size of the tomatoes in any standard shipping container be specified and marked on the container;

—establish four mandatory size designations (small, medium, large, and extra large), each with a 1/32-inch overlap;

—require that only one of the four sizes be included in and be marked on the container; and,

—eliminate the commingling of different sizes within a container.

The revisions, which reflect changes in modern marketing and packaging methods, respond to an industry initiative, Haley said.

AMS establishes standards for official grading of hundreds of agricultural products. Use of the grading service is voluntary, i.e., requested by industry, and paid for by users. The standards assure buyers that they get the quality they pay for.

The revisions will be published as a final rule in the May 13 Federal Register. Copies may be obtained from AMS, USDA, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Fresh Products Branch, Standardization Section, rm. 2056-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456, telephone (202) 447-5870.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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MADIGAN ANNOUNCES DAIRY RELIEF MEASURES

WASHINGTON, May 10—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced that he is taking several steps to help alleviate the financial stress being experienced by dairy farmers.

"The dairy industry is experiencing difficulty which is creating hardship for our dairy farmers. They need our help, and I'm going to do everything I can, given USDA's budgetary and legislative constraints, to ease their most pressing concerns," Madigan said.

Madigan will be taking the following administrative short-term relief actions:

- Make advance purchases this year for next year's school lunch and other domestic feeding programs.
- Temporarily suspend the resale of CCC cheese and nonfat dry milk stocks so that inventory is isolated from the market while prices are at or near the support price level.
- Make dairy products fully available for export credit or food aid donation programs.
- Expand the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP) to include cheese as an eligible export commodity.
- Facilitate the use of DEIP by providing risk protection to private exporters who may be harmed by unpredictable future actions of the CCC to adjust the relative price support between butter and nonfat dry milk.
- Expand the use of dairy products under the Section 416 donation program by including nonfat dry milk as an eligible product for donation.

The specifics of implementating these initiatives are being finalized, Madigan said. ''However, it is important that dairy farmers know that USDA is taking action to improve the current situation in the dairy industry. Our objective is to fully implement these initiatives as soon as possible.''

In addition, Madigan, in April of this year, advanced the timetable of USDA's long-term dairy study by six weeks. ''I agreed to move up the completion date of this study so that Congress would have time to review our work before considering any legislation.'' The first draft of the long term strategy report is expected to be printed in the Federal Register May 15. There will be a 15 day comment period with the final report to Congress expected by June 15.

Kelly Shipp (202) 447-4623
Bob Feist (202) 447-6787

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USDA UNDERTAKES $1.9 MILLION STUDY OF BIRDS COLLIDING WITH PLANES

WASHINGTON, May 13—The U.S. Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration, is launching a $1.9 million study of new methods to reduce collisions between birds and airplanes.

"At first glance, it's hard to believe that a one-pound seagull can damage an airplane," said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "But in fact, the airline industry reports well over $25 million per year in damages from birds.

"In a typical year," Glosser said, "APHIS receives reports on 1,300 to 1,500 collisions between birds and aircraft, particularly in the Northeast. That's a hazard to air travelers and a needless expense to the airline industry, involving repairs and lost flying time."

The site for the five-year study is the Sandusky, Ohio, field station of the Denver Wildlife Research Center, operated by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Under the new cooperative agreement, APHIS wildlife biologists will investigate new ways to keep birds away from airports. Richard A. Dolbeer, project leader at the Sandusky station, says research will focus on three areas:

—Making the habitat at airports less attractive to birds;

—Evaluating whether landfills near airports significantly contribute to the problem; and

—Developing and evaluating new methods for frightening or repelling birds that congregate near airports.

"We'll pay particular attention to gulls," Dolbeer said. "Gull populations have increased dramatically all over the country, perhaps in part because they have come to see landfills as dependable sources of food. Gulls have been responsible for more than half of the reported collisions of birds with airplanes.

"For example," Dolbeer said, "we'll try out environmentally safe chemical repellants that can be added to temporary pools of rainwater. Gulls and other birds seem to be attracted by puddles, especially in coastal areas where open, fresh water is limited. Altogether, we're concentrating on ecologically sound approaches that will make flying safer for people and birds."

Amichai Heppner (301) 436-5222

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USDA ANNOUNCES PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF 1991 PROGRAM SIGNUP

WASHINGTON, May 13—Producers have signed contracts to enroll 167.5 million acres of feed grains, wheat, upland and extra-long staple (ELS) cotton, and rice in the 1991 commodity acreage reduction programs, according to a report issued today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Under the contracts 16.9 million acres will be designated as Acreage Conservation Reserve (ACR). In addition, 11.3 million acres will be idled under the 0/92 and 50/92 provisions of these programs and 0.5 million acres will be planted to minor oilseeds under the 0/92 provisions.

The acreage enrolled in 1991 commodity programs represents 78.4 percent of the 213.7 million acres of total crop acreage bases established for these commodities. For the 1990 programs, 78.0 percent of total crop acreage bases was enrolled with 26.0 million acres devoted to conserving uses, compared to 28.2 million this year.

National Summary of the 1991 Enrollment Report

Crop	Effective Base	Enrolled Base	Percent Enrolled	ACR[1]	0,50/92 Idled	Pltd to Minor Oilseeds	Total	Net Flexed Acres ([2])
	mil acres		%		mil acres			
Corn	83.0	63.0	75.9	4.7	2.5	.1	2.5	-2.6
Sorghum	13.5	10.3	76.4	.8	1.5	.01	1.5	-.5
Barley	11.5	8.6	74.9	.6	1.3	.1	1.4	-.5
Oats	7.3	2.8	38.1	.0	.5	.04	0.5	-.3
Feed Grains	115.3	84.7	73.5	6.1	5.8	.3	6.0	-3.8
Wheat[3]	79.4	66.7	84.0	10.0	4.9	.3	5.2	-1.6
Upland Cotton	14.6	12.2	83.6	.6	.3	N/A	.3	.2
ELS Cotton	.2	.03	12.1	.001	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rice	4.2	3.8	91.4	.2	.4	N/A	.4	-.3
Total	213.7	167.5	78.4	16.9	11.3	.5	11.8	-5.6

[1] Acreage Conservation Reserve.
[2] Normal flex acreage and optional flex acreage planted to another crop.
[3] Enrolled base includes 35.5 million acres of "Winter Wheat Option."

Producers who participate in the 1991 commodity programs agree to reduce their plantings from the established crop acreage bases by at least 5 percent for wheat; 7.5 percent for corn, sorghum and barley; 5 percent for rice, upland and ELS cotton; and oats at zero percent.

Producers have the option to plant permitted crops other than the program crop on up to 25 percent of any participating program crop acreage base without suffering a reduction in the size of the base. This acreage is known as "flex" acreage. The first 15 percent of the flex acreage is called "normal flex acreage" (NFA) and the other 10 percent is called "optional flex acreage" (OFA).

Producers intend to plant 4.1 million acres of "flex" acreage to soybeans, .4 million to minor oilseeds and 1.0 million acres to other crops.

NATIONAL SUMMARY of 1991 FLEXIBLE ACREAGE

Crop	Soybeans	Minor Oilseeds	Other Crops	Total
	mil acres			
Corn	2.333	.064	.251	2.648
Sorghum	.302	.018	.081	.401
Barley	.213	.068	.123	.404
Oats	.081	.018	.037	.136
Feed Grains	2.929	.168	.492	3.589
Wheat	.811	.216	.370	1.397
Upland Cotton	.160	.011	.045	.216
Rice	.232	.009	.054	.297-
Total	4.133	.403	.962	5.499

Participating producers are eligible for program benefits such as price support loans and deficiency payments. Also, producers could request that 40 percent of their projected deficiency payments be paid in advance. These payments are made in cash.

Signup for the 1991 programs began on March 4 and ended April 26.

Printed copies of the tables can be obtained from the USDA, OPA, News Division, Room 404-A, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone: (202) 447-4026, ask for press release 0488-91.

Bob Feist (202) 447-6789

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BURLEY TOBACCO ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO MEET JUNE 4

WASHINGTON, May 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Burley Tobacco Advisory Committee will meet at 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, June 4, at the Campbell House Inn, 1375 Harrodsburg Road, Lexington, Ky., to discuss new policies and procedures for the 1991 burley marketing season and other related issues.

The 39-member committee, established by the secretary of agriculture, provides information essential to the orderly marketing of burley tobacco and recommends opening dates and selling schedules for the burley tobacco-growing regions from Missouri to Virginia.

The meeting is open to the public. Those wishing to address the committee should contact the Director, Tobacco Division, AMS, USDA, Room 502 Annex, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone (202) 447-2567.

Written statements may be submitted to the same address before or after the meeting, or may be deposited with the chairman of the advisory committee at the meeting.

Notice of the meeting will be published in the May 16 Federal Register. Copies are available from the above address.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

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USDA TO HOST FEDERAL FORUM ON LOW-FAT GROUND BEEF TECHNOLOGIES

WASHINGTON, May 14—A meeting to review the technologies being developed to produce low-fat ground beef will be held June 18, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official announced today.

"Numerous low-fat ground beef technologies have emerged since last October, when USDA announced low-fat beef would be tested in the school lunch program," said Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. "We are also seeing new proposals for making low-fat ground beef palatable coming through every few weeks."

Since much of the agenda involves cooking and tasting, the event will be held in the cafeteria of Gaithersburg Senior High School, 314 S. Frederick Ave. (Rt. 355), Gaithersburg, Md., Haley said.

"This will be a good chance for government specification writers and purchasing officials to meet with industry designers of the many low-fat ground beef technologies and exchange ideas," Haley said.

AMS, which purchases ground beef for domestic feeding programs, will co-host the event with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, which conducts palatability tests of ground beef.

Officials from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, the Human Nutrition and Information Service, and the Food Safety and Inspection Service also will participate. In addition, food procurement officers from the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs will take part in the meeting.

Firms, agencies, and individuals wishing to attend the event or participate in it should call Herbert Abraham, AMS Livestock and Seed Division, (202) 447-4486 by June 10.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179
Edwin Moffett (202) 447-4026

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USDA ANNOUNCES AMENDMENTS TO BURLEY, FLUE-CURED TOBACCO PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON, May 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced amendments to the burley and flue-cured tobacco marketing quota programs.

Keith Bjerke, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, said most of the amendments were required by the Farm Poundage Quota Revisions Act of 1990.

Amendments were proposed and comments requested in a March 14 Federal Register notice.

''All comments were carefully considered,'' Bjerke said. ''The final rule on these programs contains the same provisions as the proposed rule, with a few minor technical changes. The final rule does not, however, contain any reference to the treatment of life estates interests as did the proposed rule.''

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES

WASHINGTON, May 14-Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

—long grain whole kernels, 9.45 cents per pound;
—medium grain whole kernels, 8.49 cents per pound;
—short grain whole kernels, 8.50 cents per pound;
—broken kernels, 4.73 cents per pound.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

—long grain, $5.80 per hundredweight;
—medium grain, $5.23 per hundredweight;
—short grain, $5.15 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3 p.m. EDT. The next scheduled announcement will be made May 21 at 3 p.m. EDT, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-7923

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USDA ANNOUNCES MILK INVENTORY MANAGEMENT STUDY

WASHINGTON, May 14—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced the completion of the Milk Inventory Management Study required by amendments made to the Agricultural Act of 1949 by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

''This study is a broad look at the economic impacts of milk inventory management programs on dairy farmers, consumers, and federal government programs,'' Madigan said. ''With this study as a tool, we can continue shaping solid, balanced, long-term dairy policy.''

The study looks at four types of milk inventory management programs and the effect of these programs at several milk price support levels. Congress required that the study also include an examination of a program to support the income of milk producers through a system of target prices and deficiency payments and an alternative classification of milk and other proposals submitted by the public.

''I advanced the timetable for this study by six weeks so that public debate could begin on a matter of considerable concern among dairy farmers with the current situation,'' Madigan said.

The study is scheduled to appear in the May 15 Federal Register and includes notice of a 15-day period for public comments. Comments should be sent to: Dr. Charles Shaw, Commodity Analysis Division, USDA/ASCS, Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013 and must be received by May 30, 1991.

''All comments will be carefully considered,'' Madigan said. ''A final report, with recommendations, will be delivered to the Congress before June 15, so it is imperative that those who desire to comment do so within the 15-day period.''

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

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USDA DECIDES TO PERMIT IMPORTATION OF AVOCADOS FROM NEW ZEALAND

WASHINGTON, May 15—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will begin permitting the importation of avocados from New Zealand, a USDA official announced today.

"We have determined that New Zealand is free from high-risk pests, such as fruit flies and weevils, that attack avocados," said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"Avocados from New Zealand pose no pest risk that can't be handled by our port inspectors who examine all agricultural imports to ensure they are free from pests and contaminants," he said.

New Zealand produces one thousand metric tons of avocados a year. "It is unlikely that U.S. imports of avocados from New Zealand would total more than 500 metric tons annually," said Glosser.

USDA statistics project the increase of avocados entering from New Zealand will add only 0.5 percent to the total available supply in the United States during the months of July-December and should cause no appreciable change in U.S. avocado prices.

The decision was published as a proposal on Feb. 4 with a 30-day deadline for comments.

The final rule will be effective on June 14. Notification of the decision is published in today's Federal Register as docket 91-039.

Doug Hendrix (301) 436-7255

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USDA PROPOSES FEE RISES FOR VOLUNTARY GRADING OF TOBACCO

WASHINGTON, May 15—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing fee increases for voluntary, i.e., industry-requested, grading of tobacco.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed increases would be from $29.45 to $32.40 per hour for basic grading service, from $35.15 to $38.70 per hour for overtime grading, and from $44.05 to $48.45 per hour for grading on Sundays and holidays.

The new rates would cover increases in salaries, benefits, travel and administrative costs, Haley said.

The proposed increases would not affect mandatory tobacco inspection and grading or the programs at USDA-designated auction markets.

The voluntary program is used chiefly by cooperatives in grading processed tobacco. Normally, components of such tobacco have already been graded, but once these components are blended, their original grades do not apply to the blended product, Haley said. To store such tobacco under Commodity Credit Corporation loan, cooperatives must re-grade it. Under law, all tobacco under CCC loan must be USDA-graded for the quality it has while under loan.

Notice of the proposed fee increases will appear in the May 16 Federal Register. Comments, received no later than June 17, should be sent to the director, Tobacco Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, rm. 502 Annex, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Copies of the proposed rule and additional information are available from that office, telephone (202) 447-2567.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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USDA PROPOSES INCREASE IN FEE FOR MANDATORY INSPECTION OF TOBACCO

WASHINGTON, May 15—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing an increase in the fees and charges for the mandatory inspection of domestic tobacco sold at designated auction markets.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed fee of 70 cents per hundred pounds would cover increases in salaries, benefits, travel and administrative costs.

"The current fee of 67 cents per hundred pounds has been in effect since July 1, 1989," he said.

USDA conducts an annual review of the status of funds of the tobacco inspection program. The 1991 review was presented to the National Advisory Committee for Tobacco Inspection Services at its meeting on March 26. The committee recommended that the fee be increased to 70 cents.

Notice of the proposed fee will be published in the May 16 Federal Register. Comments, received no later than June 17, should be sent to

the Director, AMS, USDA, Tobacco Division, P.O. Box 96456, Room 502 Annex, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Copies of the proposed rule and additional information are available from the division director, telephone (202) 447-2567.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

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